LIGHT YEARS AHEAD IN TREATING FEMALE CANCERS
CONTINUING THE LEGACY OF VASCULAR PIONEERS
SCARLESS KEYHOLE SURGERY

Professor Christina Fotopoulou,
consultant gynaecological oncologist
It has been an exciting few months for Imperial Private Healthcare. It makes me proud that, even in our busiest periods, our patients continue to receive the highest level of care and discretion.

While high-profile events such as the birth of Princess Charlotte of Cambridge in The Lindo Wing put us under the media spotlight, the experience and professionalism of all our staff mean we deliver the same exceptional care to everyone who uses our services.

Of course, we are always looking for ways to improve the patient experience. Our customer service manager is working with teams across all sites to set new standards of excellence for non-clinical aspects of care (see page 10).

Clinically, we have an enviable reputation, and several articles in this issue highlight the innovation and experience within our surgical teams.

Our world-renowned gynaecology team manages some of the most challenging female cancers (see pages 6–7). Our specialists have the skills and expertise to support women throughout their entire care paths. One patient who had ovarian cancer tells Inside Private Health how a radical procedure saved her life.

The vascular team, too, is breaking new ground in the treatment of disorders affecting blood vessels, arteries and veins. On pages 8–9, read how our clinical and academic work in this field is finding less painful and more effective solutions to these conditions.

We profile Barry Paraskeva, a pioneer in scarless surgery, having been the first surgeon in the UK to remove a gall bladder and an appendix through the belly button. He tells us on page 4 why this is a safe and effective option.

Finally, we report on our cohort of resident medical officers (page 5), and why their valuable support to consultants on the ward is of benefit to patients.

This issue is a reminder of how Imperial Private Healthcare’s service and standards surpass what patients would experience elsewhere, especially in terms of our surgical ability and desire to find faster and more effective treatment options. I hope you enjoy reading it.

Kerensa Heffron

“The experience and professionalism of our staff mean we deliver the same exceptional care to everyone.”
New midwifery service offers round-the-clock support to private patients
A new private midwifery package at Queen Charlotte’s & Chelsea Hospital is offering private patients one-to-one care with midwives throughout pregnancy and birth as an alternative to consultant-led care. A suite of services is available to patients, including 24-hour text or phone access to their dedicated team of up to three midwives. The package includes ultrasound appointments, antenatal assessments and classes, and a midwife-led delivery, with one of the dedicated private midwives. For information, contact +44 (0)203 313 3925.

New modern matrons recruited to continue high-quality nursing standards
Imperial Private Healthcare has recruited new staff to three modern matron roles. Michelle Hope (Charing Cross Hospital), Tim Leak (Hammersmith Hospital) and Nicola Rose (St Mary’s Hospital) will provide dedicated nursing leadership at their respective sites. Michelle has extensive nursing experience covering haematology, oncology, chemotherapy administration, and bone marrow and stem cell transplantation. Tim was formerly ward manager of both a large elective orthopaedic ward and a busy polytrauma ward. Nicola previously spent five years within Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, working in acute medicine and specialising in high dependency care.

New head of business development strengthens improvement plans
New head of business development Jane Boyle is working with consultants, referrers and the wider private healthcare team to develop an expanded service portfolio that meets the requirements of patients and purchasers. Jane also manages the international team and embassy relations. Before taking up the role in May, Jane, a CIMA qualified accountant, worked within the business and projects team of a leading NHS private patient unit.

Accreditation for 24/7 research into hyper acute stroke treatments
Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust has been designated a Hyper Acute Stroke Research Centre. The accreditation recognises the Trust as a centre that can develop research alongside clinical service delivery. Consenting patients now benefit from round-the-clock access to clinical research into breakthrough stroke treatments. The Trust will also participate in several stroke-related studies and be able to offer patients leading experimental therapies and drugs.

CONTENTS:
3 News in brief
4 In the spotlight: Barry Paraskeva
5 Resident doctors provide round-the-clock care
6 Light years ahead in treating female cancers
8 Continuing the legacy of vascular pioneers
10 Raising the bar of customer service
11 How to find us
Few surgeons can remove an organ through the belly button, but Mr Barry Paraskeva has mastered this scarless procedure.

Mr Paraskeva has worked for Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust since he began training in 1988, with roles including chief of surgery. Now a consultant surgeon at The Lindo Wing, he specialises in general and colorectal keyhole surgery and, in 2007, was the first person in the UK to remove a gall bladder and an appendix through the belly button. He has taught single-incision laparoscopic surgery (SILS) across Europe and the Middle East, and is among just a handful of surgeons in the UK with this expertise.

Pushing surgical abilities

“It’s a difficult technique – making minimally invasive surgery even more minimally invasive,” he says. “It’s fortunate that I work in an innovative environment where I’m free to push my abilities to give my patients the best outcome. It helps that I’m ambidextrous.”

Mr Paraskeva treats conditions ranging from gallstones and appendicitis to colon cancer and can remove malignant and benign tissues with a 2cm scar in the umbilicus. Around 85 percent of his surgeries are SILS procedures. He has carried out hundreds of these surgeries on patients of all ages, from those in their 80s to children as young as five. He even once performed a SILS operation on a GP in front of 100 other GPs.

The procedure is as effective and, when performed by Mr Paraskeva, as quick as standard keyhole surgery. Because there are fewer incisions, many patients experience less pain and recover more quickly. If a person needs chemotherapy, they can do so without the issue of prolonged recovery from more invasive surgery.

“It’s fortunate that I work in an environment where I’m free to work innovatively and push my abilities to give my patients the best outcome.”

Psychological benefits

“Being diagnosed with bowel or colon cancer is traumatic,” says Mr Paraskeva. “I tell patients that, using SILS, I can remove the cancer and leave only a tiny scar. That removes some of their anxiety. The only visible evidence of an operation is a plaster on the belly button. That makes people feel good about themselves.”

Mr Paraskeva also offers belly button reconstruction to patients who have had umbilical hernias or as a standalone procedure for cosmetic purposes.

His aim is to encourage more patients to consider SILS. “I believe this is the best option for patients. It’s safe and innovative. And with great clinical care and a massive teaching hospital with additional services, The Lindo Wing is an excellent place to have a major operation.”
The opportunity to learn from accomplished clinical leaders is attracting the highest calibre of clinical research fellows to Imperial Private Healthcare. Experienced trainee doctors on the resident medical officer (RMO) programme are able to build their clinical knowledge and patient-facing research skills working alongside world-renowned clinical experts. For example, RMOs at The Lindo Wing at St Mary’s Hospital are under the supervision of Professor Ara Darzi, honorary consultant surgeon at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust and professor of surgery at Imperial College London. RMOs also work at Hammersmith and Charing Cross hospitals.

RMOs provide consistent medical cover on the wards – always available to patients and able to liaise with each patient’s consultant as needed. This gives patients continuity of care from highly qualified and motivated doctors.

Imperial Private Healthcare will continue to invite applications to the RMO programme from doctors whose research interests align with each site’s specialties, for instance neurology at Charing Cross, or oncology at Hammersmith.

Resident doctors across Imperial Private Healthcare are carrying out a vital dual role: providing round-the-clock medical cover and undertaking in-depth research projects.

MEET THE RMOs

Ahsan Rao and Emily Barrow are RMOs at The Lindo Wing. They started their three-year PhD programmes in 2014, working under Professor Ara Darzi.

Ahsan Rao

“This programme is a fantastic opportunity to learn multiple specialties from experts. It’s highlighted the importance of good communication and taking time to share information with patients in order to put them at ease.

“My research looks at risk factors among the elderly population, particularly those causing multiple chronic conditions such as dementia, stroke and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). One of my main aims is to see if there are any patterns that lead to functional decline so that policy-makers can focus on ways to reduce those factors in society.”

Emily Barrow

“My research involves understanding what safety and risk in hospitals means to patients and how we can encourage them to comment on their own care. Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust has a strong interest in patient involvement and safety – but not simply publishing their findings. It’s exciting how the teams here quickly translate research into practice.

“Clinically, I’m learning a lot about private healthcare – from the fast pace of how things are done, to understanding the different cultures of patients from all over the world.”
Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust and its private service has an international reputation for diagnosing and successfully carrying out complex surgery on patients with gynaecological cancers.

Gynaecological cancers are among the most challenging types of the disease. Many tumours are only detected at an advanced stage, requiring extended surgical treatment to achieve the best outcome for patients. Few teams have the skills to perform such surgery, but Imperial Private Healthcare has this clinical expertise and more.

The gynae-oncology unit at Queen Charlotte’s & Chelsea Hospital comprises a multidisciplinary team: specially accredited gynaecological oncology surgeons, medical and clinical oncologists, a dedicated anaesthetic team, intensive care unit staff, physiotherapists, a psycho-oncologist, and clinical nurse specialists.

World-leading surgical expertise
Professor Christina Fotopoulou, regarded internationally as a leading gynae-oncology surgeon, says: “We don’t have a one-size-fits-all approach. For some patients, it is best to operate straight away. For others, we use chemotherapy or radiotherapy first.

“My primary aim is to provide the best possible surgical care tailored to the needs and symptoms of each individual patient. In cases with advanced ovarian or fallopian tube cancer especially, the quality of the surgeon has been shown to improve survival.”

Research projects aid diagnosis
Ongoing innovative research is improving care. For instance, the team carries out highly detailed molecular analyses on cancers to determine why some patients recover from cancer, while others see their disease progress.

Consultants at Queen Charlotte’s & Chelsea Hospital are using a new test that reveals if an ovarian cyst is benign or malignant and the stage of malignancy (see boxout). The hospital also houses the new Imperial College Ovarian Cyst Clinic.
“My primary aim is to provide the best possible surgical care”

Professor Tom Bourne, adjunct professor in the Department of Surgery and Cancer, says: “Many women with ovarian cysts are wrongly told they have cancer and have unnecessary surgery.

Our clinic accurately diagnoses women so that, in many cases, we can tell the patient nothing needs to be done. And when we do intervene, we carry out the best operation for that individual patient.

“In Europe, only about half of ovarian cancer patients have their surgery carried out by a specialist gynaecological cancer surgeon. We know that to get the best outcome, you need experts like Christina and our multi-skilled team.”

NEW TEST OFFERS ACCURATE DIAGNOSIS OF OVARIAN CYSTS

A new test (ADNEX) is helping clinical staff diagnose ovarian tumours and ensure patients do not have more invasive treatment than they need.

Imperial College London and Belgian university KU Leuven collected data from thousands of patients as part of a 10-year research project. This led to an app that is being used at Queen Charlotte’s & Chelsea Hospital. It takes patient data, the results of a simple blood test and information from an ultrasound scan to give a breakdown of the risk of a tumour being benign, borderline or malignant, and if it is a cancer whether it is at an early or late stage.

“I felt I was absolutely in the right place.”

Elaine*, 61, diagnosed with ovarian cancer in June 2014, describes her experience at Imperial Private Healthcare.

“When I was diagnosed with ovarian cancer, I was told it had spread and I may lose part of my bowel, all of my spleen and some of my stomach. It was a shock.

“I’d heard that Christina [Fotopoulou] was the UK’s best surgeon in this field. Another surgeon told me: ‘Christina is extraordinary. If you were my wife or sister, that is who I would want you to go to.’

“When I met Christina, she told me my case was very serious, but she didn’t frighten me. She explained the situation.

“I had absolute confidence that she knew what she was doing and that I was in the right place. Christina painstakingly removed all tumours from my bowel, stomach and spleen, and went through my intestines inch by inch – but I didn’t lose any organs other than those related to my ovarian cancer.

“The whole surgical team was amazing, but Christina particularly is light years away from how other surgeons treat ovarian cancer. She saved my life and the quality of my life.”

*The patient’s name has been changed to protect her anonymity.
In 1954, Charles Rob and Felix Eastcott, surgeons at St Mary’s Hospital, broke new ground in vascular care when they performed the world’s first reported operation to unblock a patient’s carotid (neck) arteries. This milestone led to patients being assessed for their suitability for what is now a standard procedure known as a carotid endarterectomy.

That successful procedure boosted the hospital’s global profile as a centre for advanced vascular surgery. More than 60 years later, Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust continues to lead the way in the diagnosis and treatment of disorders affecting blood vessels, arteries and veins.

Based across Charing Cross, Hammersmith and St Mary’s hospitals, the vascular service has an international reputation for clinical and research excellence – particularly in treating carotid artery diseases; conditions affecting the aorta (the vessel that delivers blood from the heart to other arteries), especially relating to the chest and abdomen; and venous disease (varicose veins and deep vein thrombosis).

“Our procedures can be life-saving,” says Professor Alun Davies, professor of vascular surgery. “For instance, if a patient has had a minor stroke, we would carry out a carotid endarterectomy to prevent them having a further or more serious stroke. Similarly, without the correct diagnosis and intervention, an aneurysm – the result of a bulge in a blood vessel – could expand or burst.”
“It’s important patients are seen by expert consultants in vascular surgery. Imperial Private Healthcare has that experience and a drive for innovation. What we’re doing is world-leading.”

Professor Alun Davies

A multi-specialist team
Professor Davies is world-renowned for his knowledge of vein diseases. Imperial Private Healthcare’s vascular unit comprises seven other consultants, vascular surgeons, radiologists and vascular scientists – all specialists in advanced vascular disease. They manage the full spectrum of issues, from strokes to more common vascular disorders.

Varicose veins, thread veins and deep vein thrombosis affect more than 35 per cent of people. Imperial Private Healthcare offers endothermal treatments – namely laser or radiofrequency ablation, where heat is absorbed into the body to destroy the vein – as a less-painful option than surgery for these conditions. The team is also trialling techniques including the use of a ‘superglue’ to close off the vein, which improves recovery times in many cases.

Pioneering academic work
The unit is at the forefront of trials to permanently close veins by inserting a vibrating device that bruises the vein, while injecting a chemical into the wall. Known as mechanical oscillating chemical ablation (MOCA), this procedure requires only a small incision, reduces the risk of damage to surrounding nerves, veins and other tissue, and leaves less bruising than other methods.

“We’re investigating the benefits of this technology,” says Professor Davies. We’ve already published one study showing that non-thermal techniques are less painful.”

Broader research activity includes the study of blood and plaque removed from arteries to see if a condition’s development can be predicted.

All three sites have modern vascular labs with state-of-the-art technology including the UK’s only purpose-built system for robotic endovascular surgery. High-tech ultrasound and diagnostics facilities are managed by principal vascular scientist Mary Ellis, who has 30 years’ experience in this field. “It’s a specialist skill to be able to accurately interpret vascular ultrasound results,” says Professor Davies. “Mrs Ellis has fantastic anatomical knowledge.”

Dr Foster, an independent assessor of healthcare outcomes, consistently ranks the vascular unit as one of the best in the UK. Private patients have the added reassurance of Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust’s back-up services, including St Mary’s Hospital’s 24-hour services for regional vascular emergencies and national complex aortic vascular diseases.

“It’s important patients are seen by expert consultants in this field, at hospitals with the full range of treatment options available,” concludes Professor Davies. “Imperial Private Healthcare has that experience and a drive for innovation. What we’re doing here is world-leading.”
RAISING THE BAR IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

A new customer services manager is steering improvements that will meet all patients’ expectations for five-star care.

Standards of care are being raised across Imperial Private Healthcare with the appointment of a new customer services manager.

Shaan Malhotra is working with teams at all sites to set and maintain exceptional levels of hotel and customer service.

Standards are already high, says Mr Malhotra, who took up his new role in April. “Imperial Private Healthcare is world famous for its clinical excellence, and we must ensure that is mirrored by an outstanding service in all non-clinical areas”.

“That means having comfortable, luxurious and, most importantly, clinically safe patient rooms that are appropriate for people who are not well. We need to exceed patients’ expectations and offer a complete high-end private patient experience. That also means that our communication with patients, through all channels, are consistently clear, honest and of the highest standard”.

Even before taking up his role, Mr Malhotra had first-hand experience of the Trust’s exceptional care when his mother had a knee replacement at Charing Cross Hospital in 2014. “The care was flawless,” recalls Mr Malhotra, who was then working for Royal Brompton and Harefield NHS Foundation Trust. “The nursing competence and confidence and the clarity with which staff explained everything stood out to me. There’s no faltering. Staff know their game inside and out. I wrote to the chief executive to say it was the most fantastic nursing experience I’d ever encountered, and I’m delighted to be working here now.”

Making a difference

Working closely with the senior management, nursing and infection control teams, Mr Malhotra manages non-clinical services, ensuring rooms are comfortable and relaxing as well as clinically appropriate. He also supports the operations team and facilities contractor in their work to deliver and maintain high standards.

Feedback is essential to learning and improving. Comments from patients through informal conversations, Friends and Family Tests and other satisfaction surveys will be used to guide teams on what aspects of the service are most important to service users and which improvements would make the biggest difference to their experience with Imperial Private Healthcare.

“I’m here as a fresh pair of eyes and to ask what will set Imperial Private Healthcare apart from the competition – from the physical surroundings to how we communicate when patients arrive and throughout their stay,” says Mr Malhotra. “I want patients to experience consistent excellent care and absolute confidence, and for our staff to feel proud of where they work and what they do.”

If you have any feedback on Imperial Private Healthcare’s hotel services and standards of non-clinical care, or customer service in general, you can contact Shaan Malhotra at shaan.malhotra@imperial.nhs.uk or +44 (0)7787 002385.
Imperial College Healthcare Charity needs your help to raise £500,000 to remodel and expand the highly regarded birth centre at Queen Charlotte’s & Chelsea Hospital in West London.

Your support will help bring the birth centre up to the standard of other modern centres across the UK.

To find out more or to make a donation, visit www.imperialcharity.org.uk/birth-centre quoting ‘PP Birth Centre’, or call the charity on 020 3312 2206.

Thank you
At Imperial Private Healthcare, our patients experience the best of both worlds: our world-class consultants provide care in modern private facilities within the reassuring setting of some of London’s most trusted NHS hospitals.

With over 350 consultants covering every medical, diagnostic and surgical specialty, we care for our patients whatever their healthcare needs.

Our partnership with Imperial College London means that many of our consultants are involved in cutting-edge research, which in turn allows us to provide the most up-to-date treatment for patients.

All funds generated by Imperial Private Healthcare are reinvested in Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, to support and enhance both NHS and private clinical services for the benefit of all our patients.

For more information on our private healthcare services, please contact our customer relations manager on +44 (0)20 3311 7700 (09.00 – 17.00 GMT) or email private.healthcare@imperial.nhs.uk

For more information about our consultants please visit www.imperialprivatehealthcare.co.uk